Carter Center Statement on Venezuela Election

Jul. 30, 2024

(en Español)

ATLANTA — Venezuela's 2024 presidential election did not meet international standards of electoral integrity and cannot be considered democratic.

The Carter Center cannot verify or corroborate the results of the election declared by the National Electoral Council (CNE), and the electoral authority's failure to announce disaggregated results by polling station constitutes a serious breach of electoral principles.

Venezuela's electoral process did not meet international standards of electoral integrity at any of its stages and violated numerous provisions of its own national laws. The election took place in an environment of restricted freedoms for political actors, civil society organizations, and the media. Throughout the electoral process, the CNE demonstrated a clear bias in favor of the incumbent.

Voter registration was hurt by short deadlines, relatively few places of registration, and minimal public information. Citizens abroad faced excessive legal requirements to register, some of which appeared to be arbitrary. This effectively disenfranchised most of the migrant population, resulting in very low numbers of voters abroad.

The registration of parties and candidates also did not meet international standards. Over the past few years, several opposition parties have had their registrations changed to leaders who favor the government. This influenced the nomination of some opposition candidates. Importantly, the registration of the candidacy of the main opposition forces was subject to arbitrary decisions of the CNE, without respecting basic legal principles.

The electoral campaign was impacted by unequal conditions among candidates. The campaign of the incumbent president was well funded and widely visible through rallies, posters, murals, and street campaigning. The abuse of administrative resources on behalf of the incumbent — including use of government vehicles, public officials campaigning while in their official capacity, and use of social programs — was observed throughout the campaign.

The incumbent also enjoyed overwhelming positive coverage on television and radio, in terms of advertising, broadcast events, and news coverage, while the primary opposition candidate received little media coverage. In addition, authorities frequently attempted to restrict the opposition's campaign activities. This included harassment or intimidation of people who provided services or goods to the main opposition campaign.

Still, Venezuelan citizens turned out peacefully and in large numbers to express their will on election day. Despite reports of restrictions on access to many polling centers for domestic observers and opposition party witnesses; potential pressure on the voters, such as ruling party checkpoints in the vicinity of voting centers; and incidents of tension or violence reported in some localities; voting appeared to take place in a generally civil manner.

In the limited number of polling centers they visited, Carter Center observer teams

noted the desire of the Venezuelan people to participate in a democratic election process, as demonstrated through their active participation as polling staff, party witnesses, and citizen observers. However, their efforts were undermined by the CNE's complete lack of transparency in announcing the results.

Translation

Declaración del Centro Carter Sobre la Elección en Venezuela (PDF)

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About the Carter Center technical election observation mission in Venezuela
The Carter Center was invited by the CNE to observe the presidential election in March 2024 and signed a memorandum of understanding to guarantee that the mission could observe freely in accordance with the Center's standard methodology. The Carter Center deployed 17 experts and observers starting on June 29, including teams based in Caracas, Barinas, Maracaibo, and Valencia. The mission met with a wide range of stakeholders, including the CNE, candidates, political parties, civil society organizations, citizen observation groups, media representatives, government officials, armed forces, and election experts. Given its limited numbers, the Carter Center's direct observations were limited, especially on election day.

The Center has observed 124 elections in 43 nations and is committed to impartial and independent election observation that provides transparency in election processes with the objective of encouraging processes that meet international standards for democratic elections. The Carter Center will publish a final report of its observation mission, documenting the findings indicated in this statement.